MONSTER. Part One: Lions

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MONSTER. Part One: Lions

by kildeer

Summary

> "...a monster is not such a terrible thing to be. From the Latin root *monstrum*, a divine messenger of catastrophe, then adapted by the Old French to mean an animal of myriad origins...To be a monster is to be a hybrid signal, a lighthouse: both shelter and warning at once."
>
> ~ Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

Wolf Trap, Virginia - November 1975

Will:

The pyramid says
As Above, So Below
And I can't stop looking at it
Thinking about those words.

There was a storm in the night
And so many trees are broken today.
One lost a branch
Half the length of itself
And as it fell
It was caught by the others
Inverted in full leaf
So that the tree appears
To be growing up
And down at once.
I think about above
And below
And wonder whether
The message is a wish
Or a warning.

The Wolf Trap cemetery
Is quiet in the morning.
I suppose it's quiet always
Save the whispering
Chorus of the trees
But morning stretches differently
Cold and water-heavy
In dove-gray light.
Empty liquor bottles glint
Among the fallen leaves
Colors bleeding
From their curling labels.
I never see the people who bring these bottles
But I don't care if they see me
As I pull my flask out of my coat.
I'm not above day drinking in cemeteries.

Someone
Has left a nest
Against the wall of a mossy crypt -
A filth-matted flannel shirt

An empty brown bottle
A paperback copy of Dante's *Inferno*
Its pages so swollen with night
That it opens like a flower
Spine breaking in surrender.

I think about this person
As my dogs wander
Nosing into bouquets of dying roses.
Does he sleep here at night?
Where does he go during the day?
Is someone he loves buried here
Or does he mourn them all?

Two stone lions stare at each other
Across the pyramid
Chins resting on their deadly paws.
They are unnamed, but someone
Has been bringing them offerings -
Small bright coins
Snaggled wildflowers
Pieces of pale feathering wood placed
Along their powerful resting limbs.
I wonder what compels people
To pay tribute to the lions
And why they have chosen these firstfruits.
At the same time I think I already know.

There's a knowledge of magic-making
Latent in all of us.
When children go into the woods
They know to make wands
Where to find the ingredients
For their spellwork -
A fluted bird bone
A stone from deep water
A strand of spider-fine hair
A drop of blood from a fingertip
The child's face turned away in a brave grimace
Understanding intuitively
That there is power in this.
People bring gifts to the lions
For the same reasons
They bring flowers
And pinwheels
And teddy bears
To the tombstones.

The vocabulary of the cemetery
Is a lexicon of repeated words
Which are also prayers
And prayers which are
At their core
Expressions of fear -
Peace
Everlasting
Rest
Life
Remember
Resurrection
Forever
Love

A multitude of stones
Begging for something eternal
Even as their lambs melt away
And fingers break
From their guardian angels.
All edges worn down
All words fading
Until a lump of voiceless stone
Is swallowed by the earth.

My dogs return, knowing
That it's time for me to leave.
They push their noses
Into my palms and
I stare at their soft faces
Wordlessly asking them to have pity
To give me permission to stay
Because standing up means going forward
To Minnesota
Where something dark has hatched
And is building its nest
Gathering the firstfruits of its tribute.
I have to discover
What it's trying to build
And why.
The secrets of its spellwork.
I take a last pull from my flask
And slowly get to my feet
As the dogs dance around me.
I fish in my pockets and produce
A nickel
A bottle cap
A tangle of fishing line.

I leave everything to the lions
For what it’s worth.

Baltimore, Maryland - November 1975

Hannibal:

Transformation is the only constant
And everything is its ingredient.
Ingredients know what they want to be
Their destined final form.
If you listen carefully you can hear them
As you walk the aisles of the grocery store
The furrows of the endless field
The verdant chambers of the orchard.
A thumbnail pressing into the taut skin of an apple
Releases a cloud of sweet fragrance
And a crisp hiss of water
Telling you which knives you will need
To core and dice, how the pieces will sink
Puréed into sauce.
Pomegranates sing to be halved
Jeweled innards spilling
Along a wheel of white cheese.
The firm swell of a duck's breast
Beneath its pillowed feathers
Is already anticipating the heat of a skillet.
A neck, curved and twisting, shows you
Exactly where it should be cut.

The art of cooking comes not only from
Being able to hear your ingredients
But from having the knowledge and discipline
To use them correctly.
Every component must be respected
For what it is
Where it came from
Its potential.
Nothing is insignificant
And therefore nothing should be overlooked
Or wasted.

Cooking, like all transformation
Occurs within a crucible of time and heat and effort.
The monk who spends his days and nights
Chanting for the preservation and healing of life
Is not so different from the chef who stands at his station
Kneading, slicing, grinding and stirring.
Both are devout acolytes

Presiding over a great eternal birthing
In which all participate.
The children stumbling beneath
The Sisyphean weight of their backpacks
The sanitation workers in their muck-heavy boots
The flocks of upwardly mobile youths
Wearing the clothes of successful movie characters
Are all part of the water wheel.
The key lies in awareness and intention
How we choose to participate in the transformation
Of ourselves and others.
We are all ingredients in the end.
Apples and butter
Light and salt.

I would rather be the teeth of the world.

Crime Scene

Will:

The houses stay with me
More than the people sometimes.
Houses are hopeful
Built with the best intentions
A prayer for safety and belonging
In every hammer stroke.
Each detail is carefully considered
For presentation and purchase -
Big backyard
New cabinets
Finished basement
Storm windows
Closet space
Hardwood floors
Strong locks.
The prospective buyers
Are already imagining their lives here -
Arranging furniture
Watching the seasons change
From the kitchen window
Choosing the best spot
For the Christmas tree.

The house seems to watch me
As I approach.
A conditional welcome -
You may enter
But please offer protection
As I do.
A house touched by violence
Is muted
By the shock of its violation
Numbed by its bindings
Of yellow police tape
And the muffled steps
Of forensics specialists.
It seems to look away
Retreat within itself
As pictures are taken
And unfamiliar gloved hands
Cut away sections of blood-stained carpet
Specially chosen for the nursery.

The house knows
What these strangers cannot -
The weight of every footstep
Carrying through its foundations.
Juice spilled during breakfast.
Fresh paint rolled onto walls.
Closet doors opened and shut
To soothe fear before bedtime.
Love made quietly
So as not to wake the children.
Family photos which say
Let's remember ourselves
Exactly like this
Always.

How the salt and oil
Of every fingerprint
Could rebuild the lost.

The parents of Elise Nichols
Age eighteen
Sit at their dining room table
Which is built to expand for company
At Thanksgiving.
Her father is still trying to tell himself
That death has not found his family
Sniffed them out like a lioness
From the tall grass
But her mother knows.
The mothers always do.

Atom to atom
From before the beginning
Cells quickening
In the oceanic womb.
She looks up at me
And I can see the frayed end
Of the tether in her eyes
But I don't feel it
Until I begin climbing the steps
To the second floor of the house
Until I stand at Elise's bedroom door
Which holds itself stiffly
Like a wounded animal.

The silence of Elise's bedroom door
Is the silence of one praying
To go unnoticed

Because discovery
Will make the nightmare real.
And it does.
Immediately.
Elise is lying in the bed she picked out
When she was twelve years old
Beneath blankets chosen for their warmth
Against the Minnesota winter.
She could be sleeping
And that's exactly what her father thinks
As he steps forward in relief and joy
Still unable to comprehend
Such separation.

I've failed, the house says
As Elise's father sags against her bedroom wall.
I couldn't keep my promise.
I am so sorry.

Found

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

We are lost
When he finds us.
I walk where I want
Without great fear
But also without touch.
It is cold here at night.
There are dangerous smells
In the trees
And a dangerous warmth
In the wide hard road
But I walk this road
Because its threat keeps away
Unfriendly things.
I am afraid
When eyelights appear
Behind me.
I consider running
Into the trees
But I am afraid.
I keep walking.
The loud unfeeling creature
Which moves
Breathes
Sees
Yet has no Life
Crawls next to me
Terrifying
But a Living person
Speaks to me
From within it.
His voice is good
But I do not trust
His creature
So I retreat
As far as I dare
Into the treedark.
The creature stops
Then dies
On the side of the road
Which is frightening
Because I know it can be

Alive again
At any moment.
The Living person
Removes himself
From within the creature
Opening it like a kill
And I smell food.
My hunger is stronger
Than my fear
And I inch towards him
Ready to run
Should the creature come back
To not-Life.
His smell is good.
His voice is good.
His food his good.
And when I let him touch me
His touch is good.
His hands are quiet
And do not threaten
So I am brave
And enter the opened belly
Of the creature
Which does not bleed.
I hold very still
Claws digging
Eyes shut tight
As the creature shakes
And roars around me
Terrified
But he speaks to me
With his good voice
And I stay very still
Warm now.
When the creature stops
And dies
He opens its body again
And I smell Living others
But I am not afraid.
They smell like him.
They watch from within
His shelter
As he feeds me
Cleans me
Speaks to me
With his quiet hands
And his good voice.
He brings a cage

And because I trust him
I enter it.
He releases
The Living others
But I am not afraid
Because they smell like him
And they listen
To his good voice.
They have eaten his food
And been cleaned
By his hands.
They do not threaten.
I trust him
And do not challenge
The cage.
He gives me a name
Winston
And sits with me
Until I fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes

My original plan was that Will and Hannibal would be the only POV narrators of these poems, so when the idea of turning Will's dogs into a kind of Greek chorus popped into my head, I genuinely didn't know whether it was an amazing idea or an indication that I was starting to crack. I started writing this poem as an experiment, and less than halfway through I realized that not only did I need *a* Winston poem, I needed *multiple* Winston poems <3 It's actually been a really fun challenge, trying to think about the events/characters of the show from a dog's POV, and finding a style of language to go with it :)

Shrike

Will:

The blood which has dried
Becomes wet again
Gathering itself to leap
Back up between her toes
Around her knees
Over her belly
Like fishing lines
Being drawn in.
The antlers
Withdraw from her
And her skin knits itself closed
Without a trace of having been broken.
Strong hands crush
Her throat open
And the dense muscle of Elise Nichols' heart
Sparks
Begins gulping blood.
A butterfly set free.
The tiny blooming capillaries
Of her sclera
Close into blue white buds.
She stares at me
(At *him*)
Terror draining from her face
As I rise
(As *he* rises)
From where I kneel over her
(Where *he* kneels over her)
On her
On the bed she picked
When she was twelve.
As my feet return to the floor
(*His* feet)
She collapses back
Fast asleep
Warm
Safe
Dreaming.
I stand over her
(*He* stands over her)
Watching.

What are we thinking?

What do we want?

Hooks

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal:

I approach my subject carefully
As though I do not see him at all
Hoping to delay the moment
When he scents me on his trail
But this one is a special breed
Keyed to the highest frequency
And I feel his wariness
Before our eyes have even met.
It is not always easy to see the strings
Which thread the human animal
Nor the keys and hammers
Which will make it sing.
I see Will's strings immediately
But this new instrument is so rare
That I hesitate
Hands tensing in anticipation.
I do not want to play him incorrectly.
I feel as though I can already hear
The music he will make
And it is beautiful.

Will:

I don't trust Dr. Lecter on principle.
There's a casualness to him
An ease
Which is not a lie
But is still deceptive
And puts me on edge.
His deception
Is that he is trying to appear
More normal than he is.
Nothing about Dr. Lecter
Is normal, or rather
Many things about him
Are normal, individually
But combined create
The unambiguous exotic.
His accent is complex

And his face belongs
To another time and place entirely.
It's an ancient face -
A profile stamped on coins
Eyes looking out over the prow
Of a Nordic warship
Onto an ocean of ice.

I'm not here
To work with Hannibal Lecter.
I'm here
To be the bloodhound.

Hannibal:

I imagine that must be tiring for you.
Holding yourself open to your prey
As a matter of course
Invites them to approach.
It's always a gamble, isn't it
As to whether you will be able
To jump free
Before the trap closes.
If you jump free at all
That is.

Will:

What do you mean?

Hannibal:

Only that bloodhounds have a simple purpose
With clear parameters
And accept their role without conflict.
The service you perform is more akin
To that of a wild animal which is brought to heel
Then sent out to lure its own kind.
Even when you succeed
You are left staring into the eyes of your quarry
Feeling as though it is your Self in the cage.

Will:

I'm not a psychopath, Dr. Lecter.
Being able to empathize with them
Does not make me
One of them.

Hannibal:

Of course not.
I was merely speaking of emotional truth
Which is crucially different
But no less real.
Your gift is remarkable, Will
As is your willingness to use it.

Will:

It's not a gift
But someone wants me
To think it is.
Cassie Boyle
Age nineteen
Has been in this field
For at least five hours.
Her blood has frozen
Where it runs down
The goring antlers.
A crow perches
On her throat
And its beak dips
In and out
Of her eye socket
Like a seamstress' needle
Glinting dark wet
In the wintry morning light.
The last of her life
Became ice crystals
Which line the cavity
Where her lungs
Used to be.

I didn't
(*He* didn't)
Do this.

Hannibal:

Do you mind if I open the curtains?
It's rather dark in here.

Will:

Yes.
Sorry.
I have trouble sleeping.

Hannibal:

No need to apologize.
I've brought breakfast
If you're hungry.

Will:

Yes.
Thank you.

Hannibal:

It is not my intention to pin you
Like a specimen in a butterfly collection, Will.
I only wish to provide assistance as I am able.

Would it help to talk
About this new victim?

Will:

It's a different killer.
A copycat.

Hannibal:

What is it that sets these two killers apart?

Will:

Love.
And fear.

The copycat felt nothing
For Cassie Boyle.
She was
Meaningless
To him.
When I touch his mind
I touch
Outer space.
Dark matter.

The killer I'm looking for
The Shrike
Is consumed by love
And therefore consumed
By the fear of losing it.
His need to keep

The one he loves
Is so deep
That killing her
To avoid losing her
Isn’t enough.
He can’t bear the thought
Of being separated
From her
By a casket.
By a weight of earth.
He needs her
To be a part of him.

Hannibal:

Parting is all we know of heaven
And all we need of hell.

Will:

Emily Dickinson.

Hannibal:

Perhaps you and I will be friends yet.

Chapter End Notes

First poem with dual narration and dialogue, and I'm already learning a lot about HTML ;) This is also the first instance where I cover multiple scenes within one poem, and I hope it works/isn't super confusing, because I'm going to be doing it a lot! If it helps, when I'm writing these poems I often picture two actors on a stage delivering them. Sometimes they're talking to themselves/the "audience", and sometimes they break off to talk to each other :)

Apotheosis

Hannibal:

No action occurs within a vacuum
But how often we send our arrows into the distance
Without ever seeing them find their mark.
My subject is an emerging element.
I can’t resist exploring his properties -
Which interactions will smoke
Which will catch fire
Which will cascade fractals of light
And shadow.

There was a very narrow possibility
Garret Jacob Hobbs would be the Shrike.
I can't deny feeling a certain amount of surprise
When I realize my arrow has not only struck
But splintered into blood
Which covers my subject within seconds.
One expert kick breaks Hobbs's door
And he is in full pursuit
Like a falcon set into the sky.
Beautiful
This first glimpse of his strength.
Beautiful
To hear the unfaltering shots
As I follow him.

But then Will
On his knees in the blood
Shaking as though at any moment
He might break into pieces
Holding the girl’s neck
Imperfectly cut
While the Shrike slumps and dies.

Will pleading for grace as it pours
Through his hands.

And the girl, Abigail
One so loved, upon whose altar
So much sacrifice has already been made
Is just a girl after all.
Uncomprehending

Of her apotheosis.
And not yet lost.

I kneel
Take her throat
From Will's hands
Cup her pulse
Count her heartbeats
As Will's shaking subsides into stillness
His eyes wide with sight
Which transcends that of common men.

It is the sight of prophets
Who may see paradise
But just as often see the pit.

Messenger

Will:

Something
Followed me out of Minnesota.
A shadow bigger
Than the Shrike.
In my dreams it appears
As a great black stag
Shaggy and wild
But I know
This isn't a true shape.
If my waking mind
Is a house
A refuge
Then the stag is what waits
Outside
And I can feel him watching me
From just beyond the shivering tree line.

Keeping vigil
In Abigail’s hospital room
I hear the dull bell beats
Of hooves in the hall
Then the shuddering power
Of his breath
As he passes Abigail’s door.
I go to the threshold
And look out into
The sterile white hallway
Where the stag continues
To walk away from me.
The lights flicker
And die as he passes
As though the stag
Carries midnight
In his wake.

I watch him leave
Knowing
There is an understanding
Between us -
The stag will not leave me
Until I have followed
And received the message

He has been sent
To bring me.

First Blood

Hannibal:

Is something the matter, Will?

Will:

Could you be more specific?

Hannibal:

You’re circling my office like a trapped bird.
Would you care to take a seat?

Will:

I don’t do this
Normally.
Therapy.

Hannibal:

It's been mandated that you meet with me
But our conversations need not be enshrined
In formality. I believe
That would, in fact, detract
From their potential benefit.

Will:

What benefit would that be?

Hannibal:

How long has it been
Since you had a friend, Will?
Someone to stand in the dark with you
Bearing witness to the truth of it
Without judgement or dismissal
Who then opens the curtains
And feeds you.

Will:

What
Would we talk about?

Hannibal:

Whatever you like.
Whatever would be helpful to you.

Will:

I don't know
That I'll be able to move on
From killing Garret Jacob Hobbs.
I feel like I've been stained
Inside.

Hannibal:

That's understandable.
Taking human life represents a moral threshold
Which can be difficult to come to terms with
No matter the circumstances of the killing.
In your case I imagine that this struggle is amplified
By the profound depth of your abilities.
To absorb so much of another's mind
The essence of their personhood
Until you feel their feelings as your own
Is, in a sense
To become them.
When you shot Garret Jacob Hobbs
Did you feel the bullets enter your own body?

Will:

Yes.

Hannibal:

That must have been frightening.

Will:

I've been trying
Not to think about it.

Hannibal:

I hope that saving Abigail's life
Will help to alleviate at least
A small portion of your guilt
At having killed her father.

Will:

She needs to wake up first.
Besides
You were the one
Who really saved her life.

Hannibal:

You and I bear equal responsibility
For Abigail Hobbs's life now.
But neither of us is obligated to carry what happened
On our backs forever.

Will:

Would it be alright
If we talk about something else?

Hannibal:

By all means. This is
As one might say
Your stage.

Will:

If I'm a lure
It's because no one
Wants to be alone.
Not even psychopaths.
The human forest is full
Of incompatible fruitbodies
Seeking their own kind
Affinity
In soil that can
Nourish them.
Connection
Is hard won
Tenuous at best
And full of unseen trip wires.
The acceptable mask
Of human behavior
Is rarely a perfect fit.

Hannibal:

Are you speaking of the killers you pursue
Or yourself?

Will:

According to you
There's no appreciable difference.

It's been a long time.
Since I had a friend.

Hannibal:

I can understand
Why the mask you speak of
Might chafe you.
Especially if, as I suspect
You fear being honest with others.

Will:

Most people would rather
Not share my thoughts.

Hannibal:

You have a calling
Which is beyond most people.

Will:

Really.
And what is my calling?

Hannibal:

To curate the gallery of life's other side.
Nothing can be understood
Until it is observed
And nothing can be healed
Until it is understood.
Only those who are brave enough
Strong enough
May undertake this work
But the work must be done all the same.

Will:

Are you talking about my calling
Or yours?
You were a surgeon
Before you were a psychiatrist.
You've seen your share
Of blood.

Hannibal:

An unintentional parallel
But one well-spotted.
You are correct
And based on our shared experience of violence
I feel that I can be honest with you.
Will you grant me that same trust?

Will:

I guess that would depend
On what you want to know.

Hannibal:

The torment you feel
Over the death of Garret Jacob Hobbs
Does not stem from grief at having taken a life.
Am I correct?

What frightens you
Perhaps what has frightened you
For a very long time
Is that there is something inside of you
Which yearns for the kill.

You don't need to be afraid, Will.
I am not afraid of you.
Nor do I think you are dangerous
Or broken. As you said
The mask fits everyone differently.

Will you be honest with me?

Will:

It felt good.
To kill him.

Hannibal:

Is it easier to accept your actions
As necessary for the fulfillment of justice
On behalf of the Shrike's victims?

Will:

I don't think so.

Hannibal:

Perhaps there is a point at which
It becomes imperative for a cycle of destruction
To be broken, and therefore
It must always fall on someone
To make that call.

Will:

Playing God
In other words?

Hannibal:

Where does the human drive for power come from
If not God?

Will:

It comes from powerlessness.

Folie à Deux

Abigail:

There's a poem in my head when I wake.
Not *right* after I wake, of course.
My first waking is all panic, choking
On the tube down my throat
Scratching at the needles in my hands.
But the poem comes later
After they've moved me to a room
With a window where I can see the trees.

Nature's first green is gold
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower
But only so an hour.

I keep telling myself
It's still November
Of the same year
Of what used to be my life.
It took less than an hour
For things to fall apart
Which took so long to build.
Is that how it always is?
I suppose falling slowly
Is a contradiction.
Maybe it was always going
To end this way-
With a knife at my throat
And my father's tears
In my hair.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

It was never gold, though
Was it, Dad
For you?
When did you start to turn
Like a tarnished mirror
Turned dark

Reflecting nothing
As it should be.

Somehow I don't think
There were many butchered girls
In Robert Frost's grief-sunk Eden.
We read the poem in 8th grade
During our unit on *The Outsiders*.
I memorized it because it was short
And because I had to
But I think I knew
Even then
That losing my gold
Would be too ugly
For poetry.
What can I say?
Some people are marked.

Like Stephanie
Who had boobs before everyone else
And paid for it every day -
Boys tossing popcorn
Into her cleavage
And offering her $10
For handjobs on school trips.
She had a stillborn niece
And brought a shoebox to school
Full of the baby's things -
Pink-knit newborn cap
Christening gown
Pacifier.
The teachers cast sidelong looks
At each other and said
She was morbid
Under their breath.

Looking back now
I don't think Stephanie was morbid.
I just think she learned
How life really is
A little earlier than everyone else.
But we all catch up
Eventually.

My father marked me
In a way no one could see
Long before he cut my throat.
But now there's a scar

And sometimes
When I see it
When I touch it
It doesn't feel
Like the edge of a kitchen knife
Broke my skin, a cloud opening
To rain blood over the kitchen
Which flowed into rivers
Which raced to become
A lake on the linoleum
Which became an ocean
Beneath my body.

I look at the scar
And it feels as though
It pushed up from my skin
All by itself
Like a worm from the earth
A blind unflagging worker
Saying
I've always been here
You're just seeing me now.
The scar is my father
The last work of his hands
Captured in tissue.
The scar is the mark
That was always there.

And now I see it everywhere.
One mirror shifts
And the whole maze is ruined.
There are tiny mouse bones
Beneath the piles of golden leaves
Surrounding the house
Which used to be my home
And someone has written
CANNIBALS
On every door.

The mark is me.

The pillow I hold in my arms
Is full of human hair.

Hannibal:

The important thing
Is that you're not alone

Abigail:

I know.
The mark
Is on you, too.

Home

Hannibal:

The dogs do not know me
But they smell sausage
And I like to think
As they crowd around my feet
Eyes following my hands
That perhaps they smell Will, too.
His home is small and modest
Not particularly clean
But there is a tidiness to it
A welcoming comfort
And as I stand in the front room
I am struck by the idea
That this place does not fully belong to Will.
That he is wearing it like borrowed clothes.
The tinny neglected voice of the upright piano
The framed prints of pastoral landscapes, fish and wildlife
A respectable, if somewhat generic, selection of books
The unassuming utilitarian furniture
All feels as though it came with the house
Left behind by a stranger.

I look for Will
And find him in the dogs with their pungent beds
A battered boat motor propped against the wall
In a dresser drawer full
Of undershirts, socks, and briefs
Simple white clothing sold in bulk
Meticulously folded and organized
Like the drawer of a young child or a soldier.
I find Will
In the rack of fishing poles
And at a work table
Where a magnifying glass draws my eye
To the single brightest color in the house -
A carnelian feathered fishing lure
Suspended in the air.

Will has placed this table as an artist might
With an eye to the best natural light
And I sit on his chair
Peer through his glass
And survey the minutiae of his craft.

The design and construction of the lure
Are elegant in their simplicity.
I select a new feather in the same shade
And create a kind of fin
Copying the work which has already been done
As an apprentice mimics their master.

I think about Will's hands
Using these tools
And the way his breath must slow and catch
As he winds the red thread
And cinches it tight.
Such beauty and consideration
Hidden within a small thing
A seemingly careless thing
A means to a different end entirely.
I think about the fish
Which will spot this bright color
In the murky depths of a river
And be unable to resist.
I sink the sharp barb of the hook
Into my thumb so that I will be there
In that river, with that fish
And with Will
When the bait is taken.

Family

Will:

My mother left
Just after I was born.
Dad never said why
But I always figured she just
Didn't want to be a mother.
My dad did the best he could.

Hannibal:

Would you consider him
A loving man?

Will:

He cared about teaching me things.
Useful, you know -
Boat motors
Carpentry
Car repair
Fish and trap
Shoot a gun
Clean game.
That's a kind of love.

Hannibal:

A good parent feels obligated
To give their child the tools they will need
In order to survive.

Will:

Yes.

Hannibal:

Do you keep in contact with him?

Will:

He died.
A few years ago.

Hannibal:

I'm sorry to hear that.

Will:

Are your parents still around?

Hannibal:

No.
They died when I was a child.

Will:

Oh.
Sorry.
What happened?

Hannibal:

Casualties of war.
When the Eastern Front collapsed
My family and I were caught
In the crossfire, as it were.
But we were talking
About your father.

Will:

I
Yes.

My dad was a drinker.
We never had much money.
When he did get a little extra
He would go away for a day or two.
A bender.

In summer when he was gone
I would take a shotgun and a dog
And sleep in the woods
Just far enough away
That our house looked
Like a boat out at sea.

Hannibal:

Why do you think you did this?

Will:

I don’t know.
To escape, I guess.

Hannibal:

Were you perhaps
Hoping to be found?
That someone would fear for you
And come out into the darkness
Calling your name?

Will:

Maybe.
It doesn’t really matter now.

Hannibal:

See the boy -
A scrap of child
Intentional and yet so anonymous
As to seem naturally occurring
Like a candy wrapper in the grass.
A boy who will be sent to school in winter without a coat.
Who will inherit nothing but the pride to deny he is cold.
A boy who fell in love with the wind
Because it felt like being touched.

Follow

He wakes
But is not
Awake.
I have not seen
This before
And it frightens me.
The others look up
Eyes following him
But they do not.
They have seen
This before.
He moves
Through his shelter
As though he hears
Something
And knows
Where he is going
But I don’t
And I don’t like the way
He doesn’t seem
To feel
Hear
Or see me.
He leaves his shelter
Moving without
Hesitation
Or doubt
About the dangerous things
In the night.
He moves
As though someone
Has called him.
Afraid
I follow.
The dying
And birthing light
Is full grown
Above.
It is cold
Colder than the night
He found me
And he leaves
His creature

Where it sits Lifeless.
All the sounds
Of night
Are careful
Not wanting
To be heard
But I smell
Their makers
And know
They watch.
He does not
Know me
Though I walk
At his side
On the hard road
Warm
With danger.
I wish
I could hear
What he hears
To know
Where we are
Going.
There is ice
On the road
Thin as leaves
Biting cold
And every tree speaks
When the wind moves.
The dying
And birthing light
Moves
And I wonder
If it calls him.
If this is what I smell
Because there is
Something
Coming from him
A smell
Which I do not know
And I do not know
If it is good.
But his color
Is not good
And his absence
Is not good.
I do not know where
We are going

But I know
That I will follow
Him
So that he
Is not lost.
You are only
Lost
If no one knows
Where you are.

How We Lose

Hannibal:

We feel it happening, instinctively
In the same way that we step outside
And taste winter on the air.
Loss is nothing more nor less
Than a manifestation of change.
Of transformation.
As Émilie du Châtelet proposed -
Energy can neither be created nor destroyed.
It simply moves from one form to another.
Everything that has or will exist, does exist
Eternally, like the vast country glimpsed in passing
From a boat. Little comfort, that
For we who are bound to the boat.

Little comfort for Bella
Whose body betrays her with no regard
For her strength or dignity.
For that which she has already endured.
Her anger is boundless
Fundamental as bedrock
As she seeks a way to mark her loss
Make death remember
This notch in its endless belt.

Little comfort for Jack
Who felt her season start to change
But gauged the wind too late
And now can only watch, anticipating
A life marked by absence in a world
Which does not mark hers.
Nothing to do now but to do
Honorably, knowing that all who swim
Do so alone.

Little comfort for Elliot
Already drowning in water unable
To swallow the burning in his skull, pulled
Between that which is and that which is
Unknown. Calling out into the void
Hoping to guess its name
So that it will recognize him

And have mercy.
_____ *eleison*.

Little comfort for Will
So tempest-tossed
That no one would blame him
For missing the opening strains
Of this new movement, a key change
Ominous in its unconcern which leaves him
Hesitant, unsure of where to turn
And what to say to save himself
Or whether he's worth the trouble.

The everlasting invisible which sculpts
Time in membrane and mud cannot be held
To account for the teeth of a child
In the latrine pit, nor
The frothing corpses which line
The river's bed. We know

Will:

All we ever can
And it's never enough
For us anyway.
I think that's part of why
I like the river
And the trees
And the animals.
It hurts to try
With people
When we know
How it will end
But we keep trying
Anyway.
Love
Is a kind of
Forgetting.

Hannibal says he must introduce me to "a finer aftershave"

Will:

I can only imagine.
Hannibal smells like a forest
Where wild mint and rosemary emerge fresh
Beneath blankets of rotting leaves.
Specifically he smells like the salted blood
In the heart of a great stag
Which moves without sound
Through the underbrush
Muscled neck bearing
A candelabra of bone.
The stag pauses
Lifting its head
To smell the moonlight
Which is chalk and ice
Cupped in the palm of a statue
To a forgotten god.

Ripper

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will:

Tis the season
For specters rising, I suppose
But it doesn't bode well.
The shadow of the Ripper
Is one I hoped
To not fall into.
Of course
There's always the possibility
That Abel Gideon
Isn't the Ripper at all.
Violent psychosis
Is a restless hydra.

My hackles rise
As I follow Jack
To the Baltimore State Hospital
For the Criminally Insane.
Every time I have to visit
One of these places
I feel like the doctors
The orderlies
The patients
Even the bricks and bars
Can smell me
Like a Christmas ham
All saying -
We see you.
We know you.
Control yourself
Or you will be controlled.

Hannibal:

One could argue
That institutionalization often provides
A measure of peace and safety
For those who have been unable
To find such respite on their own.
Is it so difficult to imagine their relief?

Will:

The relief of a bug
Under glass.
Always observed
Restricted
Personal dignity granted
As a matter of legal obligation
Unless no one is looking.

They would want
To strap me down
Crack my head open
And prod around
Until all I can feel
Is their fingers
In my brain.

Hannibal:

You know I do not wish that for you.

Will:

I know.
You told me.
You don't want me
For your butterfly collection.

Hannibal:

A specter has risen for Jack as well.
The ghost of one he failed to save
Haunting his steps
Promising resolution
When so much of his life
Has been set adrift.

Will:

The Ripper
Is nothing if not
Cruel.

Hannibal:

Miriam Lass' arm
Left in an observatory.

Will:

Subtle
Isn’t it?

Chapter End Notes

This poem(?) is *rough*, y'alls, but I don't want to revise it anymore and I very much want to move on!

Person Suit

Hannibal:

Music, at least, is oblivious to walls
And it always finds me
Where I am hidden
In the warm spiraled darkness of the cochlea
Bewitched and humming ocean.
I take this performance
Holding it in my mouth like wine
And carry it through the halls of my sanctuary
My memory palace, to the greenhouse
Where I plant it deep among the roots
Of the Odessa Calla lilies.
The aria grows all around me -
From performances in New York and Florence
To the scratchy secondhand record
I first listened to as a boy in Paris
Itself a preservation of sound and breath
Centuries gone.
I am alone with this aria sung
In its multitude of voices.

The reception hall of the Baltimore art gallery
Is a cold and crowded affair by comparison
Headache-inducing white walls
And floors of polished granite
Upon which the heels of high society
Click like the pecking of hens.
Ambitious new money
Middle-class mothers who saved for their tickets
Wearing desperate dresses they will never wear again
Members of the board
For the Baltimore Philharmonic
Titans of industry cajoled into attendance
By their rejuvenated wives
Who vie breathlessly
For invitations to my table.
Perhaps it is time
To throw a party.

Will:

Jack shows up
In the middle of the night

Banging on my door
With news of carnage.
In seven hours
I'm supposed to be lecturing
On deep-cover infiltration
But these days
My appointed substitute assumes
That I will be absent.
The night is cold and wet
As I try to stay awake
With the windshield wipers
Beating their hypnotic rhythm.
Jack has brought coffee
From the 24-hour gas station.
Perfunctory coffee -
Warm
Caffeinated
Burnt
Comforting
In its unblinking stoicism.

We drive to a motel
The kind that rents rooms
By the hour
Where a man
Has been torn to pieces
Scattered like breadcrumbs
In a Pollock-flung trail
Which my stag follows
Into the bathroom
Where the dead man slumps
Waxen in the bloody bathtub.
The work is too blunt
Too panicked
To be the Ripper
And I say this to Jack
Even though I know
He doesn't want
To hear it.
He asks me
About the Ripper
What I think of him
As though asking
For my recollections
Of a high school classmate.

I see the Ripper
As one of those pitiful things

Sometimes born in hospitals.
They feed it, keep it warm
But they don't put it
On the machines.
They let it die.
But he doesn't die.
He looks normal.
And nobody can tell
What he is.

Hannibal:

It always surprises me
When someone can see the walls
Much less glimpse something
Of what's beyond them.
It tells me that perhaps
I am not as integrated as I would like
Not as fundamentally untouchable
And I monitor my feelings on the subject
With mild interest, fascinated
By those parts of myself which remain
Resolutely human.

It is not unprecedented
For an appointment to be missed.
It has happened several times
But tonight the absence
Aches
Like the first dissatisfied stirrings
Of an empty stomach.

Where are you, Will?

Will:

I dream
That I'm with Abigail
Sitting on either side
Of a severed stag's head
Which bears the body
Of Cassie Boyle
Like a bonfire.
The light in the field
Is bright and dark
Eclipse light
And Abigail

Calls me
Dad.

What did you say?

Hannibal:

I asked whether
You were alright.

Will:

I'll have to get back to you
On that.

Hannibal:

The Ripper has been busy.

Will:

Harvest time
Baskets heavy and dripping
On their way to market.
Not all of these
Are his, though.

Hannibal:

You're sure?

Will:

Yes.
It's like
Reading a story
And then reading
A poor translation
Of the same story
Which lacks
The poetry
Of the original text.

Hannibal:

The Ripper is a poet?

Will:

The Ripper is a murderer
With the pretensions
Of a poet.

Hannibal:

Not the pretensions
Of a judge?

Will:

When judgement amuses him
Sure.

Hannibal:

You think amusement
Is his primary motive?

Will:

That
And survival.

The author
Of shoddy translations
Is clearly not as adept
At evasion.
We catch him quickly
In the back of an ambulance
The life of his current
Victim patient
Guttering.
Again Hannibal
Is called to save a life
And he does so
Unflappable
Casting aside
His tailored suit jacket
Fabric money-heavy
Rolling up his sleeves.
Unerring
He takes hold
Of a man's life, the ancient
Intangible threads
Accessible to him
As spark plugs.
I watch him
And see the student

Eyes blurring on the pages
Of his anatomy textbooks.
The surgeon
Sweating through sleepless
Nights which bleed
Into hallucinatory days.
For a second, as
His hair falls across
His forehead, I almost
Glimpse the child.

The suspect
Has been apprehended
Is being cuffed
Outside the ambulance
But I watch Hannibal
And he fills my eyes
Like a golden tree.

Hannibal:

The upper crust is mingling in my dining room
Speculating as to the first round
Of hors d'oeuvres, but Will
Is here in my kitchen -
Winter coat
Flannel shirt
Worn jeans
Scuffed shoes.
I don't have to be close enough
To read the label to know
That the bottle of wine he's holding
Came from a supermarket
Selected absentmindedly
If not entirely at random.
He holds it as if this same thought
Has just occurred to him
And he wishes
That he could spirit the bottle
And himself away.

Will you stay?

Will:

I
No.
I mean

I'm not really
A party person.

Hannibal:

You know you're more
Than welcome.

Will:

Thank you.
Maybe another time.

Hannibal:

A private dinner
Perhaps.

Will:

Sure
That would be great.
Um
I'll just
Leave this here.

Enjoy.

Hannibal:

Thank you, Will.
Goodnight.

Will:

Goodnight.

Strings

Will:

Something is in pain
An animal out in the snow.
I hear it as I work
Repairing a boat motor
Hands grateful to be busy
Mind grateful for rest
But I can't
Block it out.
I go looking
Eyes scanning the broken
Yellow stalks spearing
Up through the snow
In the acidic sunlight
But I can't
Find anything.

A body is found
Center stage at Symphony Hall
Slouched on a chair
Limbs loose as a marionette
With the neck of a cello
Obscenely forced
Down his throat.
It reminds me
Of something
Out of a cartoon.
The kind where everyone
Ends up in hell.
I imagine
My delight
(The *killer's* delight)
In my own cunning
(*His* cunning)
As I take up my bow
(*He*, *his*)
And step up behind
This new instrument
Ready
To play him.
To create music
Which has never been heard before
And will never be heard again.

It is the music
Of undiscovered tombs
Clutched in the roots
Of nameless cities
Choked with bones.
It is our music
And it still thunders
In the vaulted space
As Garret Jacob Hobbs
Claps.

Hannibal:

Before there was brass
There was bone
Wind running through reeds
Teaching us
How to make the world sing
But no music belongs
To its instrument alone.
It requires the touch and breath
The soul of another
To bring it to life
Therefore no two players will coax
Precisely the same music
From a shared instrument.

Who was this music
Created for?

Will:

A kindred spirit.

Trapped.
Scratching from inside
To escape

My chimney?
The hammer is in my hand
And it isn't until I've managed
To pry the first brick loose
That I realize there's a hole
In my living room wall now.
There's nothing
In the chimney
And Alana is here
Looking as though
She doesn't quite

Believe my story
And I want
To have a story.
A simple one
In which I can trust
And be trusted.
Tethered
And whole
Enough to kiss the girl
And know
She wants
To kiss me too.

Hannibal:

The overture is expected, if abrupt.
We've barely begun the first course.
This musician does not seem to have
Much patience for seduction
And the dance lacks
Spontaneity
The communion
Of uncertainty
At war with desire.
The offer of alliance
Is barbed with threat
Dipped in honey
And I find I have no time
For the killers' courtship.

But then Will
Unannounced
Thundering inside
Before I've even opened the door
Tossing his coat to the floor
Boots tracking hexagonal slush
Which will become puddles
On the hardwood of the foyer
His puppyish joy redolent
Of a boyhood I never experienced
In which one travels an hour in the snow
To tell his friends
He's just kissed a girl.

The killer, Tobias Budge
Has predictably taken his leave
And there seems no point
In letting dessert go to waste

So I plate the puddings
While Will talks of Alana
His aura of youthful conquest
Gradually dimming like a cloud
Moving to cover the sun.

What were you hoping for?

Will:

Sex, obviously.

Well.
Not even that really
Not that I

I wanted
To feel, even
Just for five minutes
Like someone else.
Like the kind of man
She would want
To be with.

Hannibal:

There's nothing wrong with wanting
To escape one self
And be lost in another
But have you given thought
To what you are
Escaping from?

Will:

It's all I give
Thought to.
That's the problem.

And I can't escape anything.
It's hanging over me
Like a shadow
And I know
People see it.
It's there in their
Eyes.

Hannibal:

What form does this shadow take?
The ghost of Garret Jacob Hobbs?

Will:

Yes, but also
I've
Been hearing things.
Hurt animals.
I try to pretend that
They're real
But I know
They're not.

Hannibal:

His light has gone blue as the snow outside
Barely glancing at the plate as he takes it from me
His hands dirty as a gravedigger's
On the white porcelain.
I hesitate, considering
And then tell him about Tobias Budge.

He blinks up at me
As though realizing for the first time
That he is an FBI criminal profiler
And if I am honest with myself
A part of me regrets reminding him.
I hope, at least
He enjoys the pudding.

When Tobias Budge arrives at my office
Already bloody, clothes torn
Declaring he has killed his pursuers
This is my first thought -
Will's dirty hands
And sinking heart
Boots still dripping onto the floor.

Alone together
Tobias Budge and I
May remove our person suits
And I kill him
For his brazenness in thinking
He was worthy to approach me
But more than that I kill him
For killing Will
A fact which does not fully settle upon me
Until the police have arrived

And I sit, bleeding quietly
Wishing I could have done worse.

The walls are high
Continuously strengthened
In the kingdom of my heart's long winter
Where I have forgotten
Loneliness
The affinity of sympathetic strings
Which call out to each other
For a time in the darkness.

But then Will
Unshaven
Blue eyes gone dark
Holding himself stiffly in pain
Follows Jack into my office
And scans the wreckage
Until he finds me.

You're alive.

Will:

So are you.
I'm sorry.

Hannibal:

That I'm alive?

Will:

No
That wasn't
If I had stopped Budge
He wouldn't have come
After you. I'm sorry
About that.

Hannibal:

You have nothing to be sorry for
Will.

He sits on the edge of my desk
Bruised hands held empty
Between his knees

And our silence
Feels like spring.

Fathers

Will:

I arrive at the ocean
Like Prospero
To renounce my magic
With one last feat -
I candy my staff in corpses
Running rebar through orifices
Winding and winding the ropes
While the last ingredient
To my triumph
Watches, waiting
For his appointment.
I feel him die
My blade in his heart
Slow and steady
In time with the waves
And he is still warm
When I raise
My monument.

But then I open my eyes

And

I'm in the waiting room
Of Hannibal's office.
He's opening the door
But I'm wearing the same
Clothes, so
I can't be dreaming
Or just now waking
Can I?

Cold sweat sticks
My shirt to my spine
As I pace his office
Feeling every beat
Of my shoes on the floor
Tugging at the ends
Of my fingers -
Here
Here
Here

Here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here

Hannibal is solid
In my periphery
Like a mountain
In a hurricane
And I try to focus
On his voice
To slow down
And let him
Fill my eyes.

He's telling me
I've lost time.
I've traveled
Unconscious.
My mind
Is shutting me out
To survive its abuse
He tells me I need
To stop.
And he asks me
Why?

Why do I
Do this?

I do it
Because I want
To save people.

And who saves you?

It's not about me.

Yes, it is.
To me, it is.

Abigail:

It's about me.
I know it is
Even if I don't want

To think about it.
The fact that
Something about me
Made my dad want to kill
To butcher
To feed.
What did I do?
What did he want?
Did he want to fuck me?
Did he want to kill me
Because he couldn't
Bring himself to fuck me?
Or did he just hate me?
I can't decide
Whether any of these answers
Is worse than the lack
Of answers at all.
But now the ghosts ringed round me
Speak the same inescapable
Truth -
They died
So I could live.

Am I worth it?
How could I ever be?
One sad girl
Is never going to tip a scale
That heavy.
And if he had just
Taken what he wanted -
My body
My life
Or both
They would have walked free
And I would just be
Another sad girl
In the ground
Before her time
Whatever that means.
Mourned
Remembered
Innocent.

Will:

I still don't remember
The time I lost.
When Jack tells me

I was acting
Normally
It scares me more
Than anything else.
Who was this Other
Who was also me?
What did he say?
How did he walk?
How did he drive?
Did he turn on the radio?
Did he choose music?
Was it his decision
To go to Hannibal
Or mine?
How little of me
Exists at all
If no one noticed
I was gone?

I make sure to show up
For my lecture
And I make sure
It's a good one -
I have my slides
I don't even need my notes.
I read from the books of magic
Contained within the totem pole
Feeling the focused energy
Of my students and
Forcing myself to stand
In its spotlight
Because I am here
I am real
Except this

Isn't.

Alana walks in
And when I blink
My eyes
It all vanishes -
My students
My slides.
I am here
But they
Are not.
I am here
To be

Rejected
All over again
Because I am
Collapsing
And even as Alana
Takes me in
Her arms
I feel myself falling
Through like sand.

Abigail:

I have nothing left
But the mark.
The mark of violence
Which is also me.
Which wears my face
And answers to my name
But exists
And grows
In ways I cannot
Control.
Will and Dr. Lecter
Try to tell me this
And I know they're right
Because the violence
Which wears them
Watches me
From behind their eyes.
I can feel Will
Pulling against it
Like a dog against a leash
Because he doesn't want
To be the mark.
He wants to be
My father, but
Not *my* father.
He says
I'm important to him
And I don't know how
To tell him that being
Important
Is where I went wrong
In the first place.

I wait for the call
For the news
That a body has been found

And when it comes I feel
Scared, mostly.
I'm brought to the morgue
To identify the body
Of Nicolas Boyle
But I know that's not
The real reason I'm here.
I'm here because Agent Crawford
Wants to see me flinch
Wants to catch me in a lie.
I look at Nicholas Boyle
Grey and blue and gutted
Raised from the snow
Like a nightmare, but
Still dead.
Dead for good.
I look at Nicholas Boyle
And I feel
Powerful
Because I made this happen
And I can look
Agent Crawford in the eyes
And tell him how I fought
When I was alone
When I thought
I was destined to die
And how I
Survived.

Hannibal says
I've put us both at risk
By giving up the body
And I'm grateful
For his self-interest
Which almost outweighs
His concern for me.
If Will was in Hannibal's place
He would throw himself on the tracks
With love in his eyes.

Will:

The magician leaves
His door unlocked, waiting
For his judgement to arrive
Prepared, like a bard, to tell
The history of his exploits -
Shapeshifting and sorcery

The power of secrets
Taking the good faith of others
Their innocent belief in his
And making himself
Invisible.
How he killed the son
Of the woman who left him
And how his legend
Will endure.

We tell him a new story
About the blind spot
In his grand design -
How the son
Crowning his monument
Was his son all along
Protected from him
By a mother
Who saw through
His enchantments.
I watch the slow savoring joy
Drain from his eyes, gone dead
Like a breaking spell
And his hand falls
Once
Twice, ringing
A heavy silent bell.

I go to see Nicholas Boyle
To see his killer
If I can.
What remains
In the ice light of the morgue
Is tragic in its
Mutability
In its inability
To speak for itself
To stand and accuse
To proclaim
I am still here
I am still real

His hair is red
And the jagged line running
From navel to breastbone
Has been stitched closed.
No stitch can repair
The decay tunneling

His body like an empty lotus pod
And no degree of cold
Can sweeten his smell.
In my mind his muscles stretch
And he lifts himself to sitting
On the stainless steel slab.
The stitches come undone
And there's a knife
In my hand
Which I drive into him.
His eyes widen in pain
In shock and fear
But it's not me
Reflected in his eyes

It's Abigail.

Hannibal
Is alone in his office
At his desk, drawing
Listening to opera.
I don't bother to knock
And he doesn't seem
At all surprised to see me.

During the drive here
I told myself
It might not be true
And if it was
Hannibal wouldn't know.
But he does.
Of course he does.
Not only does he know
He helped.
A terrible moment of hysteria
As I imagine Hannibal
In his three-piece suit
Italian shoes
Burberry coat
Dragging a bleeding body
Into the woods
But then I imagine
Abigail
Following after him
Terrified
Covered in blood
And the two of them agreeing
We can tell no one.

It makes me feel
As though I'm not
Really here
All over again
And I turn away
To the tall windows
Where it's raining
In the street light.

Behind me
Hannibal is in full flow -
Self-defense
The stigma of the Shrike
Protecting Abigail
Looking after her future.
He keeps saying the word
Father
And it's obvious
He's manipulating me.
I look out at the rain
And think about Nicholas Boyle
Dead one week
Before his twenty-sixth birthday.

I feel Hannibal
Crossing the room
To join me at the window
The wide stripes on the curtains
Casting a dark ruby band
Across his eyes
Reflected raindrops
Simmering and pooling
Over his skin.
He tells me
We are Abigail's
Fathers now.
He asks me
To keep this secret.

I consent
With a nod
And he puts his hand
On my shoulder.

Abigail:

He doesn't need
To say anything.

There's a kind of
Light
That comes into his eyes
A light which is also
A shade, like
A curtain being drawn.
Looking over my shoulder
Then looking at me.
It makes me feel
Skinned
Seen through
With nowhere to hide.
I turn
Just enough
To look down the aisle
Of the train car
Until I see the girl
Who looks just like me.

Nothing changes.
He wears the same clothes
Has the same face
But this is not my father.
Except that it is.
This is the Other
Who is also my father
And he is waiting.
I make sure
The girl is not looking
Then I get up.
I feel my face transform.
I hear a new voice
Come from my mouth -
Is this seat free?

I will find out
Who she is
Where she lives
When
She will be alone
While the Other
Waits
And watches
The prairie go by.

Hannibal isn't surprised
When I tell him.
He takes me in his arms

And tells me
I’m innocent.
He and Will
Are going to keep me
Safe.

Alive

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal:

You cannot be forever torn in two
By regret, this tormented mind tormenting
Yet still determined to go on.
It's no way to live, Will.

Will:

But maybe
It's the only way
I can.

Hannibal:

What is it that you fear will happen
If you let go?

Will:

What happened
To Garret Jacob Hobbs
And Nicholas Boyle
And Tobias Budge.

Hannibal:

That you will kill those
Who would kill you?
Who would kill others?

Will:

You know what I mean.

Hannibal:

I do, but you and I both know
That at the moment of death
We take hold of life
With such force that all else
Is rendered meaningless.

Will:

Kill or be killed?

Hannibal:

The way of the world
Some would argue.

Will:

And who am I to argue
When it's gotten us this far.

Hannibal:

But

Will:

But
I had this case
Back when I was working homicide in New Orleans.
A thirty-seven year old handicapped woman named Maryanne had died and there was a wrongful death investigation. She was wheelchair bound her entire life, with the mental functioning of a baby. Her mother had to spoon feed her and Maryanne thought It was funny to grin so that everything would slide out the corners of her mouth. Her mother told us that one meal could take an hour, and that she got impatient sometimes, so after she put a spoonful of food into Maryanne's mouth she would push her forehead back with her hand, just enough to make Maryanne swallow. It worked, but it also made Maryanne cough, and she spent years coughing on her food. When she died of aspiration pneumonia, her lungs were full of clotted blood the color of Coca-Cola. I had to interview Maryanne's mother, to determine culpability. She just kept talking about how Maryanne would smile and laugh when she knew she'd made a mess.

How was Maryanne
Supposed to take hold of life?
Did she deserve to die
Because she couldn't?
When her mother "killed" her
Did she become
Meaningless?

Hannibal:

Forgive me, Will
For speaking more bluntly
Than was appropriate.

I'm simply looking for a way
To help you find peace.

Will:

I appreciate the effort.
At this point, I've
More or less given up
On the possibility.

Hannibal:

What is it that you still hope for
If not peace?

Will:

An answer
As to why I'm losing time
And hearing things.

Maybe I should get
A brain scan.

Hannibal:

Perhaps a simpler exercise
In the meantime. I want you
To draw a clock for me.

Will:

What
Does the clock do?

Hannibal:

It helps you keep track
Of who and when and where you are
To know that you're alive
When you feel yourself slipping.

Will:

It's 7:16 p.m.
I'm in Baltimore, Maryland
And my name is Will Graham.

There.

Hannibal:

He hands me the notebook
And settles back in the chair
Heavy with exhausted resignation.
He will not lighten until he is able
To go to the river where he can be
Patient, and silent, and catch a fish.
But when he brings the fish home
Rolls up his sleeves
And uses his long knife
The blood spreading dark
Red and mirrored like mercury
Makes him pause, eyes unfocused
As his hands go still

And then he is on his knees
Above a dying woman
In an ocean of blood
The fountainhead of which
Is her head cut almost in half
A boiling horizon.
In this waking dream she lives
A moment more, gagging
But then Will
Comes back and she goes
Limp on the rough floorboards.
He is awake and real again
Scrambling off of her
Sweating in terror
Covered in blood
Murder weapon clutched in his hand
And this is how Jack and the others
See him as he bursts, breathless
From the crime scene -
The very picture
Of a killer.

When he comes to me
The smell of her calls to me
From the eyelash-thin
Crescent moons of dried blood
Beneath his fingernails.
I want to scrub them clean
But also
I want to taste it.
Instead
I listen to his panic and guilt

As he darts around my office
A bird still trapped, and I feel
Exhausted for him.
He slouches against my ladder
Head tipped back on the rungs.
I relent
And recommend a neurologist.

Will:

I know I must be desperate
To go through with this.
It's everything I can do
To hold still
As I slide through
The X-ray tube -

All watched over
By machines
Of loving grace

But when I close my eyes
I see Beth LeBeau.
I feel the soft cotton
Of her pajamas
And the bright
Polished edges
Of her teeth
As I hold her jaw
Open and saw
As I pull her
Open
To see
What?

Hannibal:

Dr. Sutcliffe is a competent neurologist
But more importantly, he is an ambitious one.
He knows that I have brought him a treat
Well before Will's brain lights up the screen.
It is always a unique moment to see
The scaffolding of consciousness exposed
In this way, the dense coils of tissue
Which confer personhood.
Profound to reflect that the primal engine
Igniting all that Will is
Can be held in one's hand.

The vision confirms what I already knew
What I smelled in Will's fevered sweetness
And saw in the crushed wheel of his clock.
Dr. Sutcliffe requires little convincing
To break his oaths of duty
For the sake of curiosity and conquest.

Will:

He says my scan was normal.
That nothing is physically wrong
With me. He shows me
A picture of my brain
And it reminds me
Of the pictures
Of planets
In my middle school science textbook -

Strange bright colors
Half swallowed
In darkness
Exposed by light
Harsh and cold
As lightning.
The planets filled my nightmares
For years, crowding my sky -
Bigger than ships
Bigger than mountains
Bigger than anything
I could imagine
Hanging over me blind
Unknowable
And ready
To fall.

I look
At the picture of my brain
And tell myself
That it's a part of me
That it *is* me
That I'm seeing
And understanding it
Through itself.
But I don't feel any more
Convinced
Than when I looked
At myself in the mirror
While washing

Beth LeBeau's blood
From my hands.

I look
At the picture of my brain
And know
That all my worst fears
Will come true.

Hannibal:

Jack does not want to believe that Will is broken
Any more than he wants to believe
That he broke him.
He wants to believe that Will is innocent
Fundamentally pure of heart
In a way that will endure
The merciless breaking of the world.
That the essence is somehow inviolable
Though trapped in a maelstrom of mirrors.

Will:

It's 10:36 p.m.
I'm in Greenwood, Delaware
And my name is Will Graham.

I don't turn on the lights
Out of respect for the house.
Beth LeBeau's blood
Is still real, galactic
Across the floorboards.
In time with the traveling
Beam of my flashlight
I realize
I'm not alone.

Something
Someone
Is under the bed.
Someone
Who could only be
The killer.
I move carefully
As though approaching
A starved rabid animal
Caught in a trap
And she bursts from beneath
The bed, already running

Past me to the door, and
When I try to catch her arm

I open my eyes
In the snowy woods
Feet sore in my boots
Throat burning with cold
Tears freezing
In my eyelashes
As I shine the light
On my watch
As I check the empty
Black sky
As I turn helplessly
Calling into the trees -

It's 1:17 a.m.
We're in Greenwood, Delaware.
My name is Will Graham
And you're alive!
If you can hear me
You're alive!

Hannibal:

See the man -
Unannounced and distrustful
Indifferent to the world's accolades.
Brilliant, yet terrified of his thoughts
And even more terrified of his heart.
Who mourns for himself in silence, briefly
And only when it cannot be avoided.
A man who will comfort a killer
When he himself is lost.

Will:

She sees thousands of faces
And doesn't know
Doesn't recognize
Anyone
As someone
She can trust.
In cutting Beth LeBeau
She was trying
To see her face.

Her name is Georgia Madchen
And her mother has given up.

I can see it in her eyes
The last embers of a torch
Carried valiantly by a woman
Who was told countless times
That her child
Could not be saved.

The torch held high
For love
For the life
That is of her
And also of itself
Until the torch burned
Until it blistered her skin
Until her muscles quaked
With the effort of raising it up
Until she begged in her heart
For a downpour
For a way to lose the war
Without surrender.

This ember is all she has now
And she holds it close
As though ashamed
To be seen carrying it.
At the same time
She aches for her daughter
Ember pulsing in time
With her pain
And with her anger
That nothing could be done.
That hope existed
Only to have its heart carved out
Over and over again
A Promethean torture
Of love.

Doctors
Nurses
Specialists
Tests
Treatments
Medications
Scans
Needles
Psych wards
Restraints
Examination

Analysis
Theory
Guesswork
Negligence
Promises
Opportunities
Studies
Retreats

And Georgia
Numb to defeat
As she continues to fail
A test she doesn't understand.
Numb to disappointment
As those who promise hope
Sigh and look away.
Numb to love
As it fails to give her
What she needs.

Jack says
I need to trust him.
Hannibal says
I need to trust him.
My twin anchors tethering
Me to the ocean floor
While a small starved
Corner of my mind whispers
That I've been caught.

I try not to let this feeling
Strangle me as I slide
Into the CT scanner again.
The great blind wheel
Of the X-ray tube
Rotating around me
I close my eyes
And wander
Through the woods
Unseen and unheard -

Have you seen the ghost of John?

Head swimming with the songs of the night birds -

Long white bones with the skin all gone.

Exposed sticky tissue starting to freeze -

Wouldn't it be chilly
With no skin on?

I wake alone
When the machine expels me
Feeling confused and
Oddly late to the party
As though I accidentally slept
Through the apocalypse.
I find my clothes, and then
Like the punchline of the world's
Most belabored joke
I find the blood.

I don't know for sure
That any of it's real
Until police arrive
Until Jack takes charge
And Beverly bends over me
Reassuring me gently
That I can't be the killer.
It looks like Georgia
My newest stray
Heard my voice in the forest
After all.

I don't know why
I still try to sleep.
I've never been very good at it
And it's never been
Very good to me either
But I keep coming back
Like a dog returning
To the only person
Who will give it scraps
Even if those scraps come
With a kick in the ribs.
My nightmares soak the sheets
And I put down towels
Roll away from the clock
And hope
It will be better
This time.

Growling wakes me.
On the other side
Of the room
Every dog is awake

Limbs tense
Hackles raised
Teeth bared
Heads turned as one.
I know without looking
That Georgia Madchen
Is under my bed.

She lies curled on her side
Filthy and emaciated
Primordial
As though the darkness
Beneath my bed
Could be the cave
Where she hides
And prays for the return
Of the sun.

I see you, Georgia.
Think of who you are.
It’s midnight.
You’re in Wolf Trap, Virginia.
Your name is Georgia Madchen.
You’re not alone.
We are here together.

Georgia:

Am I alive?

Chapter End Notes

This one's for my sister. And for Maryanne.

Influence

Will:

At the end
Of the world there is
A wall of ice, and it is
Breaking.
Breaking
So deep inside
That you can't see
It happen, until
Tremors shake
The snow, and then it is
Falling.
Falling
Into the sea
Until the sea
Pulls back, is
Sucked back
From the sussurating
Shoreline, from
The beach and
The magician's staff
Of bodies, and then
There is a wave, and it is
Rising.
Rising
Like a wall to block
The sun, and
Its shadow
Covers me

Sweat covers me
As I wake in bed. Not
Sweat
Water
Water still
Rising as
The world
Melts
As I
Become
Water

Hearts
And tongues
Cocks and kidneys
Hang from the trees
On the side of the road
Like Christmas ornaments
Strung with veins.
Abel Gideon has escaped
And now appears
To be on a voyage
Of self-discovery.

I stand at the back
Of the briefing room, trying
To listen to Jack as
The room fills
With antlers
A forest of
Antlers
And everyone knows.
Everyone
Can see
What I am
What I've done
Where I was always
Going to end up.

Hannibal:

And where is that?

Will:

The Baltimore State Hospital
For the Criminally Insane.

Hannibal:

Do you believe yourself
To be insane?

Will:

No.
But that isn't much
To go by.

Hannibal:

How does anyone keep track
Of their own sanity?

Will:

I know
What you want
Me to say.

Other people tell us
And we have to trust
That they're telling us
The truth.

Abel Gideon
Feels betrayed
By the people he trusted
To tell him he was insane
So now he scrambles
Their brains, and
They're here in the lab
The cafeteria where
Only corpses are served
And the water
Is still getting in from
The wave that is
Still rising, trickling
Around the edges
Of the doors which
Hide the bodies, and
I know that
I need to be
Still and
I need to be
Quiet, if
I don't
Want them to
See me.

The sanctity
Of Abel Gideon's mind
Such as it is, was
Violated, and now
He is calling out
For someone new
To tell him who
He is, a mating call
Of bodies for

The Ripper
That backstage impresario
With all his elegant knives.

It's snowing
And Jack is driving me
To the observatory where
We think Abel Gideon is holding
Dr. Chilton and Freddie Lounds
Hostage. It's night, and
Only six feet of world
Exist at a time
On the stage
Of the car's headlights.
I stare at the road
Flying under us
Until it doesn't seem
To be moving at all, until
A cataclysm of
Blood on the road
Exists and is gone
In a second of time
Which is a world
Created and lost
In less
Than a heartbeat, and
I don't know if
It was real because
Jack is talking about
To
Me, saying
I need to let go
To block out
To take care of my
Self, and I don't
Know how to tell him
That they
Are my self -
That I am
Fractured
Multi-being.

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself.
I am large.
I contain multitudes.

Jack tells me to wait
In the car like a child
Whose parent must run
Into the drugstore, but
I am naughty
And get out once
He and the SWAT team
Have gone
Into the white dome looking up
Into the sky.
The night feels
Like restless limbs held
Still too long in church
And I am not cold
At all as my boots crunch
A good sound
The snow.

There is
An exhalation
A grunt of hot breath
Where the stag
Fur lustrous dark as
Raven feathers
Waits.
He is not cold either.
He wants
An adventure.

Hannibal:

Will arrives on my doorstep
Holding a gun to the back
Of Abel Gideon's head.
Naturally, I invite them in.

What are you doing here, Will?

Will:

I need
I need you
To tell me
That this is
Real.

Hannibal:

It's 7:27 p.m.
You're in Baltimore, Maryland
And your name is Will Graham.

Will:

Not *me*
Real
This -
Him
Is he real?

Hannibal:

Is who real, Will?

Will:

Garret Jacob Hobbs.

Hannibal:

We're alone, Will.
Just you and I.

Will:

No
I followed
And you *led*
He's the message
He *has* to
Be

Hannibal:

Will comes apart where he stands
Eyes rolling white as his mind escapes itself.
I take the gun from his trembling fingers
I hold his face
Smoothing the tears from his cheeks
And listen.

Will:

I pulled my car over
To the side of the road.
It was high summer in Louisiana
Air thick and hot as soup
And I had seen

Blood on the road.
I took my flashlight
And walked back
Along the blacktop
Until I found it
Still wet
Brighter than the movies
And followed it down
Through the fireflies
Into the grass lining
The ditch like
Long limbed anemones
Where the doe had died.
The impact had crushed
One side of her body in
Pushing her fawn out
One delicate leg and
A broken neck
Hanging out of her
Full of screaming flies.

I think about the one
Who mourns them
And wonder whether
He has found vengeance.

Hannibal:

I sit across the table from Abel Gideon
Gun comfortably at hand
A bowl of ostrich eggs between us
Like progenation altar fetishes
As snow falls in the winter night.

We discuss the creation of identity
Whether it is born of thought or of action.
How much of one's identity exists intrinsically
And how much of it comes into being
Through the process of being seen by others?
How was anyone to know
That Abel Gideon was the Ripper
If he did not start acting like the Ripper?
And in acting like the Ripper
He is now being treated like the Ripper.
When one is called a killer
And treated like a killer
Is one compelled
To become a killer?

Will emerges slowly
From his post-seizure lethargy, head turning weakly
Towards the sound of my voice like a flower
Turning towards the sun.
I make sure that he is functional, relatively speaking
I coax him into position on the chessboard
And once he has made his move I go
Back to preparing my dinner.

Will:

I've lost track of whose
Car I'm driving, but
Halfway to Alana's house
I think
It might be
Hannibal's? It's
A car
And I'm driving
To Alana
With a gun
To stop Abel Gideon
From killing her.

The car lurches
To a stop. I'm here
Even though
I don't remember
How I know where
Alana lives, but
It doesn't matter.
I'm on my feet
I'm not cold
I'm moving
I am here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here
Here

And so is Abel Gideon.
He stands in the snow
With his hands in his pockets

Outline dark against
The light of Alana's house.
I stagger to his side and
Garret Jacob Hobbs
Turns to look at me -
Eyes gone milky
Skin the color of
Wet newspaper clotted
In the rain gutter.
But it can't be
Garret Jacob Hobbs
Because
Garret Jacob Hobbs
Is *dead*
And Hannibal said
That Abel Gideon
Would be here
And here he is
And from somewhere
Far away but
Getting closer
The wave
Which sounds like wind
Is still rising.

Gideon says
What I already know -
That he doesn't know
Who he is.
That his Self is lost, if
There was a Self to
Begin with, if
There is a Self to
Find.

Even now
Like this
I know what he means.
I know Abel Gideon
Because I have been
Abel Gideon
Because I have been
Garret Jacob Hobbs
Because I have been
So many fucking people.

But sometimes
I have also been

The Me myself -
Sometimes
I have been quiet
And singular.
I have walked
Beneath the trees
And listened to the birds
And woven tiny bright feathers
Onto fishhooks.
My dogs run to me
And I see my one Self
In their joy.
No matter how
Many people
Think and feel and talk
Inside my head
My dogs know me
By my voice
By my hands
By my smell.
Their recognition of me
Means that I am
Still here
Whole.

And in my wholeness
I shoot Abel Gideon
And collapse
In the snow.

Hannibal:

You doubt my motives, Dr. Du Maurier?

I am encouraging you
To examine your motives.

I care for Will, as a patient and as a friend.
I want to help him.

It is not always possible
To help our patients
No matter how much
We may want to.

Sometimes all we can do
Is listen.

Chicken Soup

Will:

Silkie chicken
Wolfberries
Broth
Star anise
Ginger
Red dates
Ginseng

Hannibal recites these ingredients
Like a holy invocation
Unpacking his Tupperware
At the end of my hospital bed
And it takes me a moment
To realize it's soup.
I'm sick, and he's made me
Chicken soup.
He lays it out on the table for two
As I ease myself from bed
And walk my IV stand
Over to him.
He opens the curtains a little
And I try not to think about it too much -
That he's here
That there's soup
That it's the best I've ever had.

Luckily
He starts talking about other things -
About Georgia, her recovery
My recovery, even though
Something still plummets inside
When he says

Mental illness
Dementia

Like the words have already been
Carved onto my headstone.
I don't want to sound childish
But I don't know how to tell him
That this doesn't feel like who I am
Because when have I ever given him

Reason to believe that I know
Something as simple as that?
When I was out of my mind with fever
Trying to kill Abel Gideon
While seeing the ghost
Of Garret Jacob Hobbs?
Hannibal tells me
That he won't say anything
To Jack yet, not until
The doctors have more information.

And I feel very young
Suddenly, absurdly as though
I'm remembering a childhood -
Out of school for a snow day
Wet and wind-burnt from sledding
A solemn pact between friends
To not tell the grownups
About a broken window.
A childhood
I never shared with Hannibal
And yet I look across the table
At him, and for a moment I think -
We haven't changed that much at all
Have we?

Georgia

Chapter Summary

Will talks to Georgia in the hospital.

Will:

Georgia Madchen lies curled
On her side, not in darkness now
But the brightest point
In a darkened hospital room
The oxygen chamber
Making her look like a mermaid
In a too small aquarium.

The length of her forearm and hand
Where I accidentally pulled
Her skin away is no longer
An open wound, but shines
With the first careful webbing
Of scar tissue.
Her eyes are clear
And she offers me
A shy smile.

You look better.

Georgia:

Do I look alive?

Will:

You look pretty.

She blushes a little at that
Tucking her hair
Behind her ear.

Georgia:

What are you in for?

Will:

Fever, and they
Don't know what else
Yet.

Georgia:

They won't find anything.
They'll keep doing tests
Taking blood
Trying different meds
Until your brain turns to jelly.
Until they have to try
Something else
Before they kill you.
All you'll ever know
Is that you're wrong.
You don't fit the way
They think you're supposed to
And there's nothing
You can do about it.

Sorry.
Maybe you'll be luckier
Than me. They say
I can get better
But I don't know
If I want that
If it means
Remembering.

Will:

You don't remember
What happened?

Georgia:

I don't remember it
As something that happened
To *me*.
It's not easy
To explain.

Will:

My schedule's wide open
If you want to try.

Georgia:

I've always pretended to feel
What people want me to feel.
Sometimes
Not very often
Not for very long
I can believe it's real.
But then it's like
I wake up.
Everything *I* feel
Is like a memory
Twice-removed
And everyone
Has been lying to me.
Forcing me to be a lie.

When I was away
Walking in the snow
I didn't know I was hungry.
I remembered
Someone else's hunger.
I didn't know I was cold.
I remembered
Someone else being cold.

I've always loved ghost stories.
They're the only ones
That ever felt

Will:

Real.

Georgia:

Yeah.

Will:

The next day
Georgia is dead.

I don't believe it
When Jack tells me
But then I go to her room
And I get there just in time
To see them pull

What's left
Out of the blackened oxygen chamber.

While everyone turns away
Trying not to choke
On the smell
I stare at her.
She looks like a sculpture
Crafted from carbon
Built up in papery layers
Brittle armature suggesting
Shoulders
Breasts
Head tilted back
Crying out
And I can feel it -
Alone
Trapped
Screaming in a soundproof box
As air becomes fire
Down my throat
Like broken glass.

The forensics team
Is taking pictures
Examining the chamber
Putting out theories
While Jack listens and nods
And no one sees
Georgia.
There is no Georgia anymore
But it's hard for me
To remember that
When I can still feel her
In my head.

She spent so long
Thinking she was already dead.
What did dying feel like?
Was it the first time she realized
What being alive meant?

There aren't any flowers in her room.

Jack and the others
Are speculating that
She killed herself
So she wouldn't have to face

What she did
And I know
I can't cry here.
Not now.

Later
I go into my bathroom.
I lock the door
Turn on the water
And cry for her.

I dream
I'm home
In my own bed, room full
Of warm sleeping dogs.
Georgia comes to me there
Corpse light in her sunken eyes
A kudzu tangle of dirty hair
What used to be
A pink dress.
She waits, watching me
Until I get up.
Until I follow her.

She leads me outside
Where the night sky
Is cold, hard as stone
Above blue-glowing snow.
I hesitate on the porch
As Georgia walks
Towards the swallowing dark
Beyond the house light.
She turns, looking back, asking -
See?
See?
Then she jerks
Like a hooked fish
Mouth dropping open
Antler points like black thorns
Through her lungs, lifting
Her into the air where
The flames engulf her.
Where she burns away
Into sparks on the wind
Ash on the snow, and
All that's left
Is the stag
Head lowered

Hooves planted
Facing me.

I know him now.

He’s not the ghost
Of Garret Jacob Hobbs
Haunting me.
He’s more than that.
He’s the last enemy I will have to face
Before I cross the water.

Copycat

Chapter Summary

Will lays out his new theory of the copycat killer while Hannibal monitors his progress.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal:

I can never entirely predict which move
Will permanently alter the course of the game.
The step recognized as irrevocable
Only after it has been taken.
That's part of the fun.
I watch and I wait.
I stir the simmering stew.

Will:

Wherever he is, he thinks
He's going to get away with it
But I've got his scent now
And my path is clearing itself
As I walk it.

Hannibal:

Where does this path lead?

Will:

Georgia was murdered
Because she saw him killing Dr. Sutcliffe.
He didn't have to do that.
No one would have believed her.
But he did it anyway
And that's why
I'm going to catch him.

Hannibal:

I can see the light of immolation in his eyes
And I feel how his ghosts clamor
Compelling him to speak for them.
It is his act of penance, but also
It is his act of prayer, and like most prayer
It is born of fear.

Will:

He killed Sutcliffe, copying Georgia
But not exactly
The way
The way he killed Cassie Boyle
and Marissa Schurr
Copying Garret Jacob Hobbs
But not *exactly*.

There's only one copycat
A translator of such perfect skill
That he can't resist deviation
Can't resist that single misplaced
Punctuation mark which says

Hannibal:

You think you're on the right track
With this new theory?

Will:

Yes.

Hannibal:

I feel I should remind you
There is ample evidence
Connecting these victims
To their suspected killers.

Will:

Fuck that
Here's where we're going -
He kills Sutcliffe, copying Georgia
But he couldn't have known she would catch him
Which means
He was planning to frame *me* for Sutcliffe's murder
Which means he has access
Knows the investigations to copy them so perfectly.

It all goes back to Garret Jacob Hobbs

The man on the phone

And the murder of Cassie Boyle.
I need to take Abigail back

To Minnesota.

Hannibal:

It's transfixing to watch
The clockwork of his mind
Still in its formative youth
On the cusp of its prime
As he closes in on his prey.
The spring rain of his clarity
The reckless lightning of his heart
Striking withóut backward glance at its wake.
No animal, however painfully trapped
Could fail to appreciate
The beauty of such a hunter.
It is with regret, in fact
That I make my attempt
To deter him from this course
But the Will who stands before me now
Is clear-eyed, unswerving
My perfect arrow
And I think -
Yes
Will

Let me destroy you.

Chapter End Notes

The formatting challenge on this one was so worth it (thank goodness the poem is short!) because I love illustrating how Will is closing in on Hannibal by having Will's lines break away from the right side of the page to invade Hannibal's space on the left side of the page <3

Hunters

Chapter Summary

Will brings Abigail back to Minnesota to look for clues about the copycat, and everything goes wrong.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will:

We sit in an alcove full of plants
At the psychiatric facility
The glowing green of their leaves
Creating a pocket Eden
In the rainwater marble
Of winter.

Abigail:

Do you ever feel like
You're living the wrong life?

Will:

Sometimes
I think about another Will Graham
With a houseboat, or
A shotgun shack in the bayou.
Working as a diesel mechanic
And forgetting how to talk to people.

Abigail:

Is that life happier?

Will:

I hope so.
I have a hard time with
The audacity of happiness.
It feels like

Asking for the moon
Sometimes.

Dr. Lecter would say
It's part of my calling
To look at things
Other people
Don't want to see.

Abigail:

Life the way it really is
And all the things we don't want
To admit to ourselves.

You lied when you said
Killing doesn't feel good.

Will:

Yes.

Abigail:

The power
Feels good.

Will:

We can use that power
For more than just killing.
We can save people.
There's a killer out there
And I can catch him
But I need your help.

Abigail:

I think about another Abigail Hobbs -
Hiking in the woods with her mom
Reading course descriptions
Trying to pick a major.
Looking in the mirror
And seeing only herself.

It feels like being invisible
The way no one bats an eye
When Will checks me out of the clinic.
When we board the plane to Minnesota.

How can none of them see
What we really are?
Do I see as much of them
As they do of me?
Are we really all just
Invisible to each other?

Will rents a car and drives us
Out into the woods
To the hunting lodge five miles
And a whole universe away
From home.
He looks sick and sweaty
Crunching aspirin between his teeth
And I wonder if he's starting to feel
My dad in his head again.
I know I am.

The door isn’t even locked
And there’s a blanket of dust
Over everything. Over the table
Where my dad taught me
To break down a body.
Where he must have imagined
Mine.

We climb the stairs to the loft.
The cave of antlers.
I think about Marissa
Naked and gored
Like a trophy in this room.
Blood creeping
Between the floorboards.

Who's more guilty?
The hunter
Or their hunting dog?

Will:

What do you mean?

Abigail:

The dog is helping the hunter
But it's not like the dog
Has a choice, right?

Will:

The loft is too hot
Even though I can feel
Cold wind clawing
Through the walls to shake
The Shrike's garden.
Abigail stands
Slight and scarred
And I must ask her
Something
Because she says

Abigail:

Hannibal told you
Didn’t he?

Will:

In the antlers I lose
Track of where the
Walls are and
Abigail is still talking -

He said you would protect me
And keep my secret

The path is unspooling
Now. Of course
Hannibal knew.
He didn't want me
To come here with
Abigail, but
This can't be the answer
Can it?

A hunting dog
Doesn't have a choice.
You did.

Abigail:

I didn't, I

Will:

You *did*.
You helped your father
Find them

And kill them.
You're a hunter, Abigail.

Abigail:

And you aren't?

Will:

The antlers are
Closing in around us
As she retreats
Away from me
And I hear
Hannibal's voice
In my head -

> *Even when you succeed*
> *You are left staring into the eyes of your quarry*
> *Feeling as though it is your Self in the cage.*

Abigail feels
Like a ragdoll in my hands
As I lift her up and run her through
Like lamb onto a skewer, and

Then

A mechanical humming
Vacuum cleaner
Bright plastic
Airplane light and
A woman with an impatient
Smile telling me
The other passengers
Have gone.

Chapter End Notes

> The opening scene of Will and Abigail talking about the better/happier lives they could have really hit different as I was reading this through... :(

Gold

Chapter Summary

Abigail makes it home and finds Hannibal waiting.

Abigail:

I would know my way blind
Alone in the dark
Through the woods, crossing
Deep ravines on fallen trees
Hidden water
Running beneath the snow.
The forest understands
Has always understood
The choices I had to make
And I feel it reaching for me
Wind drying my tears
As I run away home.

A house which
Isn't my home anymore.
Maybe it will never be
A home again.
I know I've made a mistake
As soon as I step inside.
The house has gone cold
Like a dead thing
Without our warm breath
And beating hearts.
Like we were its blood all along.
Everything is familiar
And nothing is.
Like a skeleton -
I recognize you
But I don't know you.

I go to the kitchen
The room which will forever mark
The place where my life
Split in two
And Hannibal is there

Like a miracle, arms opening.
He holds me tight
Saying how worried he's been
Asking where Will is
And whether he hurt me.

I start crying again
Under the weight of his care.
I tell him the truth -
I looked into Will's eyes and saw
How much he wanted to hurt me.
He had some kind of attack.
He knows everything now.
Everyone
Knows everything now
And I realize
The trap has finally closed.
No one can save me.

Hannibal is very quiet
His heartbeat steady against my ear.
He doesn't need to say anything
And nothing changes.
He wears the same clothes
He has the same face
But when I pull away from him
The Other is there.

It's stupid, but
Even as everything tilts
Sinking around me
My mind is still trying
To separate one
From the Other.
To say Will cared
Even when something else
In him wanted to kill.
To say Hannibal cared
When something else was
Curious.

And I think I was
Important.
At least a little.
For a while.
Nothing gold can stay.

But this doesn’t comfort me
It’s not a consolation
As the Other steps forward
To touch my face
Expression gentle
Full of regret
That he couldn't protect me.

Friend

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There has been no rest
In the night.
Will wakes sick
Mud in his bed.
On his legs
And feet.
We smell
Blood.
His
And not his
As he walks
Almost falling
From one room
To another
Ignoring food
Trying to drink
Water.
He needs water
But his body
Twists on it
Cracking
Around it
Until he is sick
Until he is
Still.
And then he is
Terrified.
We want
To be with him
But he keeps us
Inside
While he sits out
In the cold morning
Hunched and holding
Himself
As though he hurts.
There is a bad smell
In our shelter.
Sickness
And bad meat.
We push at the walls

And call out
To be with him
But he is waiting.
The other
Who has fed us
Who smells like Will
Returns.
There has been no rest
For the other
Since he returns
So soon.
The other brings Will back
Inside
Gently
And we are
Confused
Because the other
Was not gentle
Before
When he made sickness
Clawed Will
And fed him
Bad meat.
We do not know
Whether the other will be
Ungentle again
But Will does not challenge
His hands
His voice
His movement
Through our shelter
So we do not challenge.
Will is quiet
Warm
Less afraid
With the other here
So we are quiet.
The other finds
The bad meat
And acts afraid
But his smell
Does not match
His movements
And we watch
For him to become
Ungentle
As he draws close
To Will

Making himself
Small and safe.
A friend
Who does not
Smell like one
But Will
Seeks him
Like the warmth
Of a birthing den.

Chapter End Notes

It was a really fun challenge to think about the events of Hannibal framing Will in chronological order from Winston's perspective, along with how the dynamics of their relationship might be interpreted by a dog :)

Suspect

Chapter Summary

Will is arrested and learns the full extent of his crimes.

Will:

I'm taken away
In the back of a police car.
I'm stripped
And told to stand still
While the contents of my pockets
Are inventoried.
While my body
My feet and hands
Are photographed.
While skin and dried blood
Are scraped from beneath
My fingernails.

None of this should be real.
I keep expecting to open
My eyes and be
Somewhere else
Anywhere else -
Walking in the woods with my dogs
Drinking coffee in Hannibal's kitchen
While he makes breakfast.
But I stay put like a nightmare
In this inescapable present.

I vomited Abigail's ear
Into my kitchen sink this morning.
She is what they're scraping
From my fingernails.
I can still feel her -
The pleasure in my hands
The puncturing
Of her body on the antlers.

Did the Other
Who is also me

Butcher
Feast on Abigail
In that cabin
Then return his rental car?
Get on a plane
And fly back to Virginia
Without anyone noticing?

Beverly and the others
Don't know how to look at me
Now, the invisible man visible
In their midst.

I guess you never know

I imagine them saying
Over beers later

But I still feel like
I should have seen it coming.

I saw it coming.
I spent years sighting it
From a distance
Like a wolf on the boundaries
Of my homestead, hoping
That I could catch it
Kill it
Keep it at bay.
But no more.

I will die institutionalized.
There will be no flowers in my room
And no stone in my name.
I put on an orange jumpsuit
The color marking me -
Danger
Deviation
Warning.

Alana has been crying.
I suppose that's something.
I sit handcuffed
In the interrogation room
Beneath the long dull eye
Of a one-way mirror
And I know
That I will never kiss her again
But it's something. She tells me

She'll take care of my dogs
And that's something too
But I can't cry here.
Not now.
She asks me
To draw a clock, and
It's not the time to laugh
But I do anyway.

It's 3 p.m.
I'm in Quantico, Virginia
And my name is Will Graham.

Later, alone in the room
I can tell the mirror
Has gone blind, but
When I get up and walk
Towards it, my reflection looks
Larger, shadowed
Twisted in the dark glass
Until the Other
Separates from me
And I remember -

In a dream I was seeking him
Following his trail
Blood on the trees
Strange tracks in the snow
Until the night became flesh
With stars for eyes.

He stares back at me now
My messenger
Through the glass?
Behind me
Unseen in the room?
He is very still
And his antlers
Look so heavy.

I must sleep, because
When I open my eyes
Jack is with me
A brash doctor mournfully
Touring the wreckage
Of his misguided creation.

He tells me a story
About a serial killer -
A copycat
Who kills
Cannibalizes
Mutilates
And makes fishing lures
From his trophies.
A serial killer
Who is also me.

Cassie Boyle
Marissa Schurr
Dr. Sutcliffe
Georgia Madchen
Abigail Hobbs

And

In a moment
In this airless room
The wind changes direction
Pushing branches aside
Revealing my path.

The story is too perfect.
Its poetry too elegant.
My Copycat.
He just couldn’t resist
Taking it one step too far.

Self Aware

Hannibal:

Despite artistic flourishes
My safety is not truly at stake.
I play my part well, I always have
And I've designed this story
To flow smoothly. A circular narrative
Full of thematically pleasing symbols.
Ample room for improvisation.

There was a very narrow possibility
That Abigail would survive
From the moment I first took
Her blood into my hands.

Dr. Du Maurier understands the value
Of silence, patience, and space.
I appreciate her undemanding calm
As she counsels me on eternity
And my place within it, but
I have no interest in an eternal life
Merely a singular one.

Dr. Du Maurier cautions
My experiment with Will Graham
Has reached its natural conclusion.
That I am in danger of losing myself.
I can't deny the situation is less than ideal
For the continuation of his treatment -
A bug under glass
As he once said.
It will either stifle his progress entirely
Or ignite full inflorescence.

I imagine my subject silenced
By the realization of his fear.
Wings clipped to waste away
In the prison of his own shame.

But then Will
Forever underestimated in a world
Which has barely caught a glimpse of him.
Incomprehensible to others

As atomic energy to a lizard
Slips their snare.

It's just the two of us now.

Will:

How did you know I was here?

Hannibal:

Where else would you go?

Will:

You said once
You weren't afraid of me.
Is that still true?

Hannibal:

It is.
What do you need from me, Will?

Will:

I need you
To know
Who I am.

Hannibal:

Is that something you're struggling with?

Will:

I know who I am
But there's an Other
Who might also be me.

Hannibal:

Is this Other
The one who killed Abigail?

Will:

I don't know
But he wants me
To think I did

Just like he wants me
To think I killed
The rest of them.

Hannibal:

To what end?

Will:

To save his own skin.
I'm on his trail, remember?

Hannibal:

Or you're in denial
Of your own mental illness.

Will:

I know who I am.

Hannibal:

Almost from the day we met
You've acknowledged that the boundaries
You attempt to create between yourself
And the killers you seek are permeable
If they exist at all.

Will:

Holding myself open to my prey
Invites them to approach, and
To absorb so much
Of another's mind is
In a sense
To become them.

Hannibal:

You remembered.

Will:

I remember
Everything you say.

Hannibal:

I can understand why it would be difficult
For you to accept the idea
That you could lose yourself
So completely in an Other.

Will:

It's not, actually
Difficult at all.

What's difficult for me to accept
Is that I could murder
Innocent strangers
Sit at my work table
Sewing bits of their lungs
And hair into my fishing lures
Without remembering any of it.

Hannibal:

What do you need
From me, Will?

Will:

I need you
To take me
To Minnesota.

See

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal finally confront each other.

Will:

It's morning in November
Every window full of golden trees
Kitchen warm with the smells
Of salt and butter sizzling fat
Sausage and eggs
Orange juice and coffee
Breakfast.
My wife and daughter move around me
Where I stand at the stovetop
Setting the table
Making a grocery list.
I catch Abigail as she passes
And plant a kiss in her soft dark hair
Which smells like apples these days
Her new favorite shampoo.
She smiles
More beautiful
Than anything I can imagine
And kisses my cheek
Before she darts away
To answer the phone.

Hello?
Sure.
Dad?
It's for you.

The phone in my hand
Feels heavier than it should
And I lift it slowly
To my ear.
Hello?

Will?

Yes.

Hannibal:

Will?

We're here.

Will:

It's still dark
When I open my eyes
But morning is close
Bleeding night
From black to grey
Just light enough to read
CANNIBALS
Spray painted across
The garage door of Abigail's house
Which seems to shrink from us
In its new yellow tape
As we approach.
I'm trying to remember
Bringing Abigail here.
Killing her here.
I try to feel
Whether the house
Remembers me
Remembers my violence.
I keep my gun out of its sight
And open the door.

Hannibal follows me
Through the house
To the kitchen
Where the linoleum is
Again
Covered in her blood
As though it has grown back
From between the cracks
From beneath the cabinets
Like mold, spreading
Her skin splitting
The once and future
Victim.

Hannibal:

I've often thought of the kitchen
As a liminal space
A place of creation and discovery.
Is this what you're looking for, Will?

Will:

I'm looking for the man
Who called this house
That morning.

Hannibal:

And if he's not to be found?
If this Other you seek
Is yourself
It is a foretaste of transformation
In which the pearled leviathan stretches
Along the depths of the ocean
To the surface
Where he finds he can breathe.
To the shore
Where he finds he can walk.

Will:

I

Know who I am.

Who
Are you?

Hannibal:

I am
Whoever you perceive me to be.

What is it
That you see, Will?

Will:

It was you.
Oh God
It was you.

Beyond the house
The sun is rising
But its light

In this space
Is riverbed dark.
Hannibal's skin glows
His face carved
From the inner flesh
Of a broken tree
A single white star
In the center of each
Black eye. And he fills
My eyes
As I raise my gun
And level it
At his heart.

Hannibal:

Who are we now, Will
Standing here together
At the altar?
Are you the hunter
The prey
The prophet
Or the magician?
Who do you become
If you kill me?

Will:

I don't care
Who I become.
I just need
To make you
Hurt.

Hannibal:

Would hurting me
Satisfy you?

Will:

Did it satisfy you
To do this to me?
Did it satisfy you
To make Abigail believe
That you would keep
Her safe?

Hannibal:

What reason would I have
To betray you and Abigail?

Will:

To see

To shoot an arrow
Blind into the forest.

To see
What would happen.

Hannibal:

Jack is at my side
And pulls his gun just in time.
The bullet meant for me
Hits the wall as Jack's shot
Hits Will, and his blood is
Hot on my cheek
Iron sweet on my lips
As he falls against the cabinets
And stares up at us, wild-eyed -

Will:

See?

Introduction

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal:

The whole, if such a thing ever was, remains
Broken, its pieces scattered, trembling
In the aftermath of calamity
Even as they seek to reclaim stasis -
To dull pain, cool fever, staunch bleeding
Before the lessons of breaking
Can be taught and absorbed.
Before they can truly understand
The unflagging alchemy of pain -
The skull of the little deer which knocks
From within the copper basin.

We can only learn so much and live.
The privileged may select chaos
Slicing their portion carefully, to be chewed
And swallowed without choking. Eating
Foie gras and veal at a fundraiser
For disaster victims a world away.
The rending of humanity
Into the pulp and gristle of the mill
Will never be real until they feel
The cold kiss of the sickle, and see
Their children bound for the block.

Those who see, whose minds
Are scaled by revelation, or the lack thereof
On the roads to Damascus, are left
Out of step and unable to maintain
Their masquerades, cleft
From all they were and might have been.
I descend through the inward spiraling
Iron barred septa of the asylum
Listening to their books of magic
And madness dictated on dust
The great harvest left to molder.

But then, from the end
Of the last catacomb passage
The scent of ozone and Old Spice

Of burnt coffee and loneliness
A lightning storm in the form
Of a man, unshaven and silent
Who sees with as many eyes
As the churning earth may put forth.
A man whom I have met, yet
Meet now anew, in the unmasked
Light of our shared stage.

Hello, Will.

Will:

Hello, Dr. Lecter.

Chapter End Notes

I first started writing down ideas for this project almost a year ago, and while I'm still deep in process (at the moment I'm clawing my way through season 2, episode 11) it feels SO GOOD to have Part One posted <3<3<3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!